

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 0512

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IT, PINT
SUBJ: ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION AND AMERICAN ATTITUDES

FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS RECORD THE SUBSTANCE OF TWO
CONVERSATIONS AMBASSADOR GARDNER HAD ON THE EVENING
(JANUARY 9) BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR WASHINGTON. THIS
TELEGRAM HAS NOT, HOWEVER, BEEN CLEARED WITH
AMBASSADOR GARDNER.

1. THE FIRST CONVERSATION WAS WITH UMBERTO LA ROCCA,
DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR TO PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI.
LA ROCCA SAID THAT ANDREOTTI IS VERY WORRIED ABOUT
THE PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION AND THE ABILITY OF THE
DC TO WORK OUT AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION TO IT. HE
DESCRIBED ANDREOTTI AS NOW BEING ON THE "EXTREME RIGHT"
OF THE DC IN THE SENSE THAT ALL THE OTHER LEADERS IN
THE PARTY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT SUBSTANTIAL CONCESSIONS
MUST BE MADE TO THE PCI IN ORDER TO RESOLVE
THE PRESENT CRISIS. LA ROCCA ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN
ABOUT POSSIBLE USG ACTION WITH REGARD TO THE
ITALIAN SITUATION. HE SAID THAT ANDREOTTI WOULD
NOT WELCOME A STRONG USG STATEMENT AGAINST THE PCI
INVOLVEMENT IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT BECAUSE
ANDREOTTI BELIEVES SUCH A STATEMENT WOULD MAKE
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IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE DC TO WORK OUT A SOLUTION.
HE SAID THAT THE DC MUST BE IN A POSITION TO GIVE
SOMETHING AND ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT OF THE US ATTITUDE SHOULD
AVOID PUTTING THE DC IN A POSITION WHERE IT HAS NO
GIVE. LA ROCCA'S COMMENTS INDICATED THAT ANDREOTTI
IS STILL THINKING OF THE POSSIBILITY OF A SOLUTION
INVOLVING THE PLACEMENT OF "TECHNICIANS" ACCEPTABLE

TO THE PCI IN SEVERAL MINISTRIES. LA ROCCA COMMENTED THAT ONE OF THOSE WHOM ANDREOTTI HAS IN MIND IS LUIGI SPAVENTA, AN ECONOMIST ELECTED AS AN INDEPENDENT ON PCI LISTS IN THE LAST PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION. LA ROCCA CONCLUDED THE CONVERSATION BY EMPHASIZING AGAIN THE IMPORTANCE IN ANDREOTTI'S VIEW FOR THE US TO AVOID THREATENING ITALY IN THE EVENT OF GREATER PCI INVOLVEMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT AS PART OF A SOLUTION TO THE PRESENT POLITICAL CRISIS.

2. THE SECOND CONVERSATION WAS WITH GIANNI AGNELLI, ITALY'S LEADING INDUSTRIALIST AND HEAD OF FIAT. AGNELLI BEGAN THE CONVERSATION BY STATING STRONGLY THAT HE BELIEVES THE US IS DOING THE RIGHT THING IN GETTING ITS MESSAGE ACROSS THAT IT DOESN'T WANT FURTHER PCI INVOLVEMENT IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT THERE IS AT LEAST A 50-50 CHANCE THAT THE PRESENT CRISIS WILL RESULT IN EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WHICH HE VIEWS "AS NOT A BAD THING," BECAUSE HE BELIEVES THAT THE DC WOULD GAIN 4 TO 5 PERCENT AND THE PCI STAND STILL OR AT THE MOST GAIN 1 PER CENT. THIS WOULD, IN HIS VIEW, BE A GOOD RESULT SINCE THIS WOULD AGAIN PUT THE DC IN A POSITION TO RULE. THE REAL PROBLEM, AGNELLI SAID, IS A GENERATIONAL ONE WITHIN THE DC. THE TIME HAS COME TO GET RID OF THE OLD GUARD, TO FIND WAYS OF GETTING YOUNGER POLITICIANS INTO

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SENIOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE PARTY. ON THE WHOLE, THE YOUNG ARE MORE FIRMLY ANTI-COMMUNIST THAN THE OLD GUARD, WHICH IS MORE INTERESTED IN HOLDING ON TO GOVERNMENTAL POWER THAN IT IS IN PRINCIPLE OR ITS COMMITMENT TO THE ELECTORATE. AGNELLI ALSO CONCLUDED HIS CONVERSATION BY URGING THAT THE US NOT REACT OVERLY STRONGLY IN ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT AT THIS TIME. SINCE EARLY ELECTIONS ARE LIKELY, AGNELLI BELIEVES THAT US SHOULD SAVE SOME OF ITS AMMUNITION FOR USE IN THE FUTURE WHEN SUCH ELECTIONS ARE CALLED.

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